

News Release
For Immediate Release

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Governor proposes Indiana Commerce Connector, no tolls on I-69

INDIANAPOLIS (November 9, 2006) – Governor Mitch Daniels today proposed the construction of the Indiana Commerce Connector, an outerbelt tollway that would link six interstates through Morgan, Johnson, Shelby, Hancock and Madison counties. The connector would stimulate economic development for many regions of the state and ease traffic congestion on existing interstates, the I-465 loop and other highways.

The governor also announced today there will be no tolls on Interstate 69 (I-69) from Evansville to Indianapolis. He has directed the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) to notify the Federal Highway Administration that the state is moving forward with the plan to build I-69 as a non-toll interstate.

“We have the chance to create six tremendous new job zones without a penny of borrowing or a tax increase. We’ve talked to leaders in communities across these counties and they are enthusiastic, so I want to move quickly to measure the transportation marketplace interest in building this road with private funds while paying the state money we can use to help complete I-69 and other critical investments in our future,” said Daniels.

Shelbyville Mayor Scott Furgeson said such a road would be a great economic development tool for his community. “The more access a community has, the better we are. Every company looking for a good location looks for ease of access, so another major thoroughfare would be a great asset for us,” he said.

The governor would utilize a public-private partnership to design, build, operate and maintain the Indiana Commerce Connector. This is an approach other states, such as Texas, are considering to fund their transportation needs. Daniels will seek legislation during the 2007 legislative session to transfer the tolling authority the Indiana General Assembly granted this year for the Evansville to Indianapolis segment of I-69 to the new Indiana Commerce Connector.

INDOT will immediately commence work to estimate the connector’s cost, establish its specific location, analyze traffic patterns, explore toll rates and revenues, and determine the connector’s value. Preliminarily, INDOT believes the value of the project would not only be enough to build the connector itself but would generate contributions toward funding other projects. Private funding to design and build the tollway could speed its construction, shaving years off the normal processes.

“Major Moves gave us a way to get started on I-69 by 2008, a decade ahead of the previous plan. And it provided enough cash to build at least to Crane. Now, we’ve got an even better idea about how to finish the job,” said Daniels.

INDOT's budget includes \$700 million of Major Moves money to start building I-69 in 2008. Ground will be broken outside of Evansville, near Interstate 64 and State Road 57, along the federally-approved route, and will proceed north toward Indianapolis. The Major Moves money is expected to build the portion of the road from Evansville to the Crane Naval Warfare Center in approximately six years after construction begins. The estimated construction cost of the entire highway is more than \$2 billion.

"We listened carefully to the concerns of some Hoosiers about tolling I-69, and about traffic between Martinsville and I-465, and we've come up with a solution," said the governor.

The Indiana Commerce Connector would link economic growth centers such as Martinsville, Franklin, Shelbyville, Greenfield and Pendleton for future development. It would be a short distance from the new Honda plant in Greensburg and would link with I-70 near the Indianapolis International Airport.

"There are enormous additional benefits. There would be less congestion and traffic on the northeast corridor of Indianapolis, and we could save hundreds of millions of dollars in new construction at various points around Interstate 465 and throughout central Indiana. You'd see a major reduction in through traffic, especially trucks, that now use I-465 and the spaghetti bowl in downtown Indianapolis to make their way across central Indiana," said Daniels.

The precise route of the commerce connector has not been determined. It would be about 75 miles in length and will be owned by the state of Indiana. The company selected to build the road would determine where construction would begin and would open various segments as they are completed. It is expected – provided the next legislature transfers the tolling authority – that the entire project could be open to traffic within 10 years of the first groundbreaking.